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THE CORN BELT AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION PROGRAM

A radio talk by Claude E. Wickard, Director, North Central Region, A.A.A., delivered in the Department of Agriculture portion of the National Farm and Home Hour Monday, March 22, 1937, broadcast by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of associated radio stations.

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Persons who own or operate farms in the North Central States will receive during the next few days from their county committees information concerning the 1937 agricultural conservation program as it applies to their individual farms. The most important item in this information will be the soil depleting base which has been assigned to each farm and I wish to explain briefly how this base was determined, and its purpose.

The county agricultural conservation committee first established a preliminary base for each farm by taking into consideration the base established on the farm in 1936. Then they revised the 1936 base so as to make it comparable to bases established for other farms of similar size, type of soil, topography and degree of erosion. After they had established this preliminary soil depleting base for each farm the county committee ascertained if the sum of the total soil depleting bases for the county exceeded the soil depleting limit for the county as established by the Triple A, and they made any revisions which were necessary to conform to this county limit. This describes the way your soil depleting base was determined. The county committees have had two years experience in establishing soil depleting bases and I know they have been very deliberate and conscientious in their efforts to establish bases which are equitable. However any farmer can appeal for a revision if he thinks that the base established for his farm is not equitable.

Now I want to explain the purpose of the soil depleting base. First let me remind you that in 1937 there will be two general groups of farms, one known as a "diversion" farm and the other known as a "non-diversion" farm. The "diversion" farms are those which have a soil depleting base of 20 acres or more, and the "non-diversion" farms are those which have less than 20 acres in the soil depleting base.

Persons who own or operate "diversion" farms will receive payments for diverting up to 15 percent of their acreage in the soil depleting base to such soil conserving crops as clover, grasses, and green manure crops. They also will receive payments for such soil building practices as the seeding of clover and grasses, and the application of lime, which tend to conserve the fertility of the soil; and for such practices as terracing and contour farming, which tend to prevent erosion of the soil. If the farmers who are cooperating in the program increase the acreage of soil depleting crops above the soil depleting base, the payments for these soil building and erosion prevention practices will be decreased proportionately.

In the case of "non-diversion" farms (those having a soil depleting base of less than 20 acres), farmers cooperating in the program will not receive payment for making any diversion below the soil depleting base established for the farm. They can grow soil depleting crops such as corn, wheat, oats, barley and truck crops in any amount up to 20 acres without any reduction in the payments which they will earn for soil building and
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erosion prevention practice.

Thus, you see, on both the "diversion" and "non-diversion" farms, the soil depleting base plays a very important part in determining the performance and payments of those farmers who are taking part in the 1937 agricultural conservation program.

Meetings will be held in almost every community in the North Central States in the next few days. Farmers who attend these meetings will learn more about the 1937 agricultural conservation program and especially how they may apply the program to their individual farms. At these meetings they will learn, if they don't know already, what crops are soil depleting and what crops are soil conserving, and what the rates of payments will be for diversion from soil depleting base to conserving crops and the adoption of soil building practices. I want to urge that you attend the meeting in your community.

In a very few days, many of you will be in the field preparing the ground for planting the 1937 crops. You may have seeded some soil conserving crops already. Perhaps when you know more concerning the program and the payments you can earn, you will want to make additional seedings of such crops or adopt additional soil building practices. I am sure it will be to your benefit to plan your farming operations now so that you may take full advantage of the 1937 agricultural conservation program.

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